

UPDATE:
LAW AND JUSTICE INTERIM COMMITTEE

Prepared by Sheri Heffelfinger, Legislative Service Division

For the Corrections Advisory Council
August 2008

The Law and Justice Interim Committee (LJIC) continues to examine mental health services for justice-involved youth and adults pursuant to its assigned studies (SJR 6, SJR 24, HJR 26, and HJR 50). The Committee instructed staff to continue to work on three major bill drafts as summarized below.

Youth Corrections

- **LCyth4** - Revising court-ordered evaluations and placement of justice-involved youth who suffer from a mental illness, a developmental disability, or a severe physical disability. The purpose and scope of the bill is to clarify the current definition of "mental disorder", ensure a youth receives an appropriate evaluation prior to being sentenced to a youth correctional facility, and tighten the statutory language prohibiting a youth with a mental disorder from being placed in a correctional facility. The bill does not address where the youth with a disabling condition may be placed.

Jail Standards

- **LCLJC2** - Establishing a pilot project for jail suicide prevention by requiring DPHHS to contract for video-conferencing or teleconferencing services, suicide screening software, and mental health professional services to assist jails to determine suicide risks and establish appropriate protocols for suicide prevention.

Involuntary Commitment Alternatives

- **LCdvr1** - Revising Montana's civil commitment laws to encompass community-based alternatives to Montana State Hospital commitments, including:
 - state matching funds for jail diversion alternatives (i.e., diverting mentally ill persons from jail to crisis services and possible commitment);
 - state contracting (through DPHHS) for emergency detention beds and short-term intensive inpatient treatment beds; and
 - suspending the involuntary commitment hearing if a respondent agrees to intensive inpatient treatment for up to 14 days.

Copies of the bill drafts as they were presented to the LJIC on July 24-25 are attached. However, they are in the process of revision based on stakeholder comments and committee member instructions. ***The LJIC welcomes comments from the advisory council on any of these bill drafts. Comments may be submitted to Sheri Heffelfinger at 444-3596 or sheffelfinger@mt.gov.***

The LJIC's next and final meeting will be September 15. For more information on Committee activities, visit the Committee's website at www.leg.mt.gov/ljic.